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SUBJECT: PM RESPONDS TO PARLIAMENT'S DEMAND FOR ANSWERS
FOLLOWING THE DECEMBER 8 BOMBINGS

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: PM Nouri al-Maliki appeared alone in a closed session of the Council of Representatives (COR) on December 10 in response to MPs' demands for answers in the aftermath of the December 8 bombings. The Prime Minister emphasized to roughly 200 COR members that the bombings were not the result of a lack of security -- which he assessed as sufficient -- but a lack of effective intelligence. Throughout a marathon COR session lasting over five hours, Maliki calmly answered questions from MPs while refusing to accept blame for the bombings. Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir al-Mufriji and Minister of the Interior Jawad al-Bolani did not appear before the COR December 10 as some had predicted, but they may yet appear for questioning in the coming days. END SUMMARY.

Maliki Addresses Marathon COR Session

12. (C) On December 8, just hours after four coordinated car bombs wreaked devastation in neighborhoods across Baghdad, the regular session of the COR was consumed by MPs' angry demands that officials responsible for Iraqi security should come before the COR for questioning. On December 10, PM Nouri al-Maliki responded to parliamentarians' demands, arriving at the COR alone, and speaking for over five hours before roughly 200 parliamentarians. After First Deputy Speaker Khalid al-Attiyah escorted Maliki into the COR, MPs agreed to hold a closed session because of the sensitive nature of national security plans under discussion. Poloffs excepted, media and outside observers were not permitted to observe the session.

Intelligence, Not Security, Is the Problem

13. (C) In his opening speech, Maliki told parliamentarians that Iraq has sufficient protection by its security forces, and that the capital is effectively protected by a cooperative effort of the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), and the Ministry of Defense. The Prime Minister emphasized to COR members that the bombings were not the result of a lack of security, but a lack of effective intelligence. When one MP pointed out that Maliki had received intelligence about the bombings ahead of the attacks, Maliki replied that the intelligence had come from the United States early on the morning of December 8, and by then it was too late to plan a response. (NOTE: MND-Baghdad had provided the Baghdad Operations Command with a non-specific threat report for a potential attack on December 8. END NOTE.)

14. (C) Maliki calmly answered questions while refusing to accept blame for the "Bloody Tuesday" events. Parliamentarians spent most of the afternoon making speeches, with some MPs calling for the eradication of Baathists in Iraq while others demanded the removal of the heads of the BOC and the MOI. At one point, Maliki pointed out that he

could not fire too many officials as consensus of the political blocs would be required for each removal, and the blocs were unlikely to agree to a broad wave of dismissals. (NOTE: Maliki's appearance followed press reports that he had removed the head of the BOC, General Abboud Kanbar Hashem Khayoon, and planned to replace him with General Ahmed Hashem Ouda Sultan. END NOTE.) As the debate stretched past 6:00 p.m., Maliki made it clear that he would stay as long as parliamentarians would host him at the COR session today, but with MPs thinning out, the session petered out at about 7:00 p.m.

15. (C) COMMENT: This latest and most high-profile of three
Q5. (C) COMMENT: This latest and most high-profile of three coordinated bombings since the summer has finally compelled PM Maliki to accept an "invitation" to the COR that he has until now ignored. The fireworks were minimal at today's session, but we may be yet in the early phases of seeing the political fall-out for Maliki as a result of the December 8 bombings. END COMMENT.
HILL